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PAUL B. PRECIADO AND THE PHARMAPORNOGRAPHIC REGIME – TESTO JUNKIE

BIOPOLITICS GENDER, JUNKIE, LIFE, MEDICINE, PHARMA, PORNO, QUEER

This article does not claim to be a comprehensive presentation (and critique) of the book “Testo Junkie” by Paul B. Preciado, which has just been published in German, but merely describes the basic facts of the so-called pharmapornographic regime. On NON, Alexander Galloway has commented on the questions of the resistance potential of a queer ontology and philosophy of difference, in whose environment Preciado also operates. For Galloway, gender remains an idea that is based on a naive universalism and has an imaginary center. In his review of “Testo Junkie”, McKenzie Wark pointed out that this text is about what Lyotard called a “libidinal economy”, an economy that now functions on a digital and molecular level in

order to produce sex, gender and subjectivity post-industrially. The pharmaceutical and porn industries are in opposition to each other within the post-Fordist capital economy, just as they work together. According to Preciado, gender and sex mutate into components of biopolitical regulations and into productions of technocapitalism, the global media and the internet. We will summarize some of the components of so-called pharmapornocological capitalism here.

According to Preciado, the Cold War period marked an intense phase of endocrinological experimentation that resulted in the birth control pill, the most widely used molecule in human history to date, and this may be considered an important starting point for the post-industrial regulation of pornography and prostitution by the state and the economy. In the 1960s, the pill was administered to certain proletarian women in Puerto Rico by white American doctors, whose eugenic interests were not to be underestimated, in order to control the birth rates of the racialized Others. The birth rate actually fell in record-breaking time. A few years later, the pill was available in the US and was marketed as a tool that would allow women to control, even liberate, their own bodies. Preciado, however, sees this more as (with Foucault) the realization of the biopolitical promise of governance of free bodies. She sees the pill as a new paradigm of the subject constitution of women, whose bodies are biologically reconfigured by taking the pill and subjected to strictly timed hormonal management, a specific form of body design that in turn programs women's sexual and cosmetic activities. The pill functions as an instrument of control to regulate the population as well as to normalize female sexuality.

The Cold War period also saw the invention of the term "cyborg", which in the context of space programs describes a technically equipped organism that can survive in an environment outside the Earth as a balanced homeostatic system. During this period, the development of synthetics and plastic (polymerization of carbon chains) was advanced, leading to a new ecological transformation of the earth with a degree of poisoning that is still increasing today. The subjectivity resulting from all these processes is the result of bio-molecular control and technical-statistical logging. Preciado summarizes: "Our global economy is dependent on the production and circulation of huge quantities of synthetic steroids, on technically transformed organs, fluids, cells (techno-blood, techno-sperm, techno-ovaries, etc.), on the global distribution of pornographic images, on the development and distribution of new legal and illegal synthetic psychotropic substances (Lexomil, Special K, Viagra, speed, ecstasy, poppers, heroin, omeprazole...), streams of signs and digital information circuits, the total expansion of diffuse urban planetary architecture, in which the ghettos of megacities border on nodes of highly concentrated sex capital." (Preciado 2016: 35) Preciado calls this global-media and post-industrial complex the "pharmapornographic regime", which generates a differentiated technoid subject in the course of molecular and semiotchnical modulations. This regime is a designer regime, insofar as specific body technologies and technoid relations between bodies, space and time are produced by means of design. Bodies and life are increasingly regulated by drugs, hormones and molecules: sex and reproduction; work, leisure and sleep; external cosmetic design and psychological moods. The semiotchnical regime, on the other hand, is pornographic; it encompasses sexuality, installs a hegemonic image regime and today occupies the entire culture industry. While the pharmaceutical industry produces the pill, Prozac and Viagra, the porn industry produces a corresponding list of blowjobs, penetrations and positions. In a kind of performative bio-feedback, the bio-sciences link synthetic products with mental states (depression and Prozac;

ADHD and Ritalin) and with gender dynamics (testosterone, Viagra and masculinity; fertility, cosmetics and the pill). Although pharma-porn capital is constantly producing new objects, they only serve as supports for the subject. The production of things and ideas, organs and signs, hormones and the soul promote the creation of the post-industrial subject. The psyche and sex are technologically designed; far from creating a coherent subject, a perforated system is created in which pills and cocks are inserted into the mouth, dildos are inserted into the vagina, silicone is inserted into the breasts or skin and fat are removed to produce new organs and prostheses. Although these technologies can call gender binaries into question, at the same time these binaries are also being reestablished. Pharma-porn capital is actually producing a naturalism of sex and gender by developing technologies that move closer to this idea. Preciado does not speak out against such a techno-body in principle, which perhaps has undreamt-of potential, but rather polemicizes against the peculiar capitalization and the specific control and production of this body. The sign of biopolitical production, as Foucault described it, is that of signs, symbols and information as well as affects – not personal affects, but the systematic effects they produce.

For Preciado, an important component of today's information economy is the pornographic industry (approx. 1.5 million websites on the Internet, which are responsible for a turnover of approx. 14 billion dollars per year). Today, the Internet and the pharmapornological industry combine to produce a differentiated control of the female body, while the ejaculatory function of the male body is increasingly becoming the focus of the techno-economy. For Preciado, the economic model of the porn industry involves the masturbatory logic of consumption, i.e. minimal investment, real-time sale and real-time consumption of the product, and the highest possible profit. The porn and pharmaceutical industries are driven by work that is permanently modulated in the cycle of excitement-frustration-excitement, i.e. through erection, ejaculation, pleasure, masturbation, control and destruction. The products are techno-sex bodies, whereby sex itself and the semitechnical information represent important resources and commodities for post-Fordist capital. This is always also about the mapping of the capital economy based on the management of bodies, sex and identities, or what Preciado calls the "somatic-political" – the sex-gender of the industrial complex, whose most important objects are synthetic steroids, porn and the internet. This generates a ubiquitous pharma-porn-punk hypermodernity.

According to Preciado, analogous to the automotive industry in Fordism, today we must speak of pharmaceutical pornography as the most important element of the post-Fordist economy. However, it is not the quantitative turnover that is decisive for this dominance, but the fact that the pharma-porn models, which are made up of masturbatory logic and the cycle of arousal and frustration, apply fundamentally to all other types of production. The labor power of the classical economy has been transformed into an (actual and virtual) orgasmic force, the "potentia gaudendi". Preciado defines this psychic and somatic power, beyond the question of gender and organ affiliation, as an infinite capacity that the entire world wants to translate into pleasure, or, to put it another way, into the capacity to be aroused or to arouse, to be arousing and to be aroused with someone. Capital earns and seduces by transforming the sexual resources of this power into labor. In this way, capital seeks to privatize the potentia gaudendi and make it productive in the form of the production of molecules (pharma) and of pornographic signs and sex services. Preciado further claims that this force – event,

becoming or practice, carnal and yet digitally fluid – cannot be appropriated or fixed as property, although it is massively at work in the controlled body (bioport), a comprehensively discursivized and technologically produced body. Donna Haraway described this body early on as a “fluid, dispersed, networked technical-organic-textual-mythical system”. The sexual body is the product of a sexual division of the flesh, with each organ characterized by its functionality. With Haraway, Preciado writes (in a slight departure from Foucault) of a technobiomight that regulates all of life technologically, logs it statistically and manages it highly productively. Viruses, hormones, voices, images, the internet, medication and the pill are integrated as values into the global bio-electronic excitation machinery. The force driving this techno-body, which exists beyond life and death, is the *potentia gaudendi*, which manages, controls and makes capital bio- or thanatopolitically productive, the latter in the context of a thoroughly profitable management of various industries, including the financial industry. However, Preciado attributes to the orgasmic force a potential to produce molecular pleasure that cannot be consumed, i.e. is infinite, even if everything is done to reduce the orgasmic force to naked techno-life with the technically supplemented pharmapornographic body.

The pharmaceutical porn industry has become the paradigmatic model of capital accumulation, on the one hand with its model of minimal input, direct sales and immediate consumer satisfaction, based on the never-ending somatic chain of arousal-frustration-excitement, on the other hand driven by new materials such as sperm, blood, testosterone, adrenaline, oestrogen etc. as well as numbers, semiotypes and signs. The pornofied labour that functions within it is aimed solely at arousal (and frustrating satisfaction), while globalized capital only manages these processes productively, just as it controls bodies, patents and copyright. Everyone becomes a worker in a global porn factory filled with bodily fluids, synthetic hormones, silicone, stimulants and mood regulators, and digital signs. Sexual labor transforms the *potentia gaudendi* into commodities. Preciado explicitly speaks here of a pornification and not a feminization of labour.

Preciado poses a similar question to Lyotard: to what extent is the libidinal a constituent of contemporary capital and how is capital interested in the libidinal? Preciado speaks of a toxipharma-pornographic economy, and she uses this term as a panoramic concept that fulfills a hinge function insofar as it refers to the analysis of the conditions of a socio-economic totality, and thus has at least a symptomatic status if it does not itself set the conditions for the constitution of this totality. Bruno Latour has referred to such panoramas, so-called 360-degree representations of social space. And these panoramic concepts remain questionable, regardless of whether we are talking about risk society, precarization society or the pharmacopornocological regime. At this point, the will to totality replaces the critical analysis of the economy.

If Preciado continues to assume, with McLuhan, that global information technologies are an extension of a monstrous techno-body, then she is still stuck in a very old techno-discourse, namely that of technology as an extension of human organs and cognitions. Even less comprehensible is the statement that this body is to be understood today as an extension of information technologies. In the discourse on technology adopted by Preciado, the body must be described as a drive center in order for it to be considered a depictive projection center for technology at all. As a result, it becomes impossible to continue imagining technical

objects as purely gestalt-like images or quantitative extensions of the body; instead, they must be seen as the result of generative projections, namely of the drive or the techno-body and ultimately of the human brain, which means that the only thing that matters is the functional similarities between the machine and the techno-body/brain. If productivity only exists as the transformation of energies and is not the result of a bodily excess of drive (influence of bodily organs and their functions on external nature), then one can finally presuppose the meta-physical energy of a techno-body and/or mind, which has the ability to generate duplications, axiomatics and complexities of machines anew. Only then can philosophy fully enter the discourse on technology!

For Preciado, pornography is sexuality mutated into spectacle, virtuality and digital information. It is the new paradigm of the culture industry, although it cannot overcome its underground status; its characteristics are performance, virtuosity, theatricalization, technical reproducibility, digitality and audiovisual distribution. Porn involves the management of the excitement-frustration circuit. And the culture industry wants to create exactly the same physiological effect, be it the pop music industry or soccer. Pornography is sex performance, soccer is sports performance, pop is art performance – together they form the hegemonic chain of the public presentation of regulated and at the same time capitalized repetition or the public retreats of regulated repetition that follow the global control circuit of arousal-frustration-excitement. Porn here may have more in common with freak shows and circus than with the cinematographic of soccer and pop. (The raids that took place last week in Berlin, in particular at the multimedia brothel Artemis, could be traced back to the Panama Papers printing. What hardly anyone remembers today and what Preciado thankfully points out – the Artemis was approved for construction by the German government on the occasion of the 2006 World Cup. The multimedia brothel, part of the soccer porn-pop chain, remains an exceptional place in public space. If politicians are now once again making massive attempts to force the sex industry out of the city, then this is also part of a clean-up operation that aims to slightly purge the foul smell of corruption, which has been somewhat heightened by the publication of the Panama Papers and which also affects capital, whether it likes it or not. Corruption is the stench of soccer, the sex industry, drug trafficking etc., which the financial industry can do something with if it can be capitalized on, but the state as a moralizing authority must regulate and inject security (by creating delinquency, for example). In doing so, it also likes to play the state feminist, who has just discovered that advertising is sexist, to which the prohibition feminists happily agree that this smut should disappear from the public scene once and for all. Nobody should get the idea of seeing the porn industry as part of the advertising and cinema industry or the culture industry, which is also dominated by migrant women, which is another reason why the porn industry should be more strongly regulated again as part of a racist discourse of the middle classes and capital).

Porn makes the private scenario public by constantly producing images with stimulating properties that release biochemical and muscular mechanisms of pleasure in both the producer and the consumer. The porn dispositive privatizes public space and charges it with masturbatory tele-media value. Audiovisual digitization takes place on various platforms (television, smartphone, computer) that allow for multiplication in the context of the arousal-frustration cycle – in Los Angeles, a mouth sucks and in many places around the world, discharges occur. For Preciado, the connection between the porn industry and the culture

industry is as follows. In the wake of Judith Butler, Preciado understands gender and later, with Anni Sprinkle, sex as a performative act that leads to the internalization of norms, the stylization and staging of bodies in public space. Porn inheres a specific system of representation or a representational dispositive that migrates into the image or the video film, whose constitutive elements are in turn theatricalization, staging and light. In pornographic film, lust is visualized solely for the purpose of arousing the consumer; it is an optical as well as pragmatic-chemical dispositive that allows the depicted and depicting lust machine bodies to slide into the unreal or a-topical with the help of the technical possibilities of editing, because lust in the pornographic set apparently knows no exhaustion and no end, rather it is visualized solely for the purpose of arousing the viewer. Quite in contrast to Sade's orgy, which follows a dramaturgy of destructive transgression (which presupposes what is to be transgressed and thus what is forbidden) in order to demand arousal through the (linguistic) combination of sex, philosophy and crime and also to increase it up to the goal of the orgy (usually murder and/or incest), although the positions (elementary unit in the orgy) must be precisely recorded – quite in contrast, for example, to the gang bang, which knows neither the participants nor the participants themselves. The gangbang, for example, does not recognize the idea/practice of transgression, neither for the participants nor for the recipients. The gangbang negates even de Sade's most fantastic gymnastic pyramids, with which he makes the orgy calculable, normalizes it, so to speak, and what remains of the orgy in the porn film is the brittle rationality of profit, the neutral construction of adding and copulating. Participating in a gangbang is a stepping stone up the career ladder for the newcomer in the porn business. Gang bang parties usually gather a minimum of women who satisfy a maximum of men. Gangbangs add & optimize, increase the sex frequency almost on schedule. Nevertheless, pleasure machines are always also frustration machines.

Gonzo (the mere depiction of the sex act and the concatenation of partial objects in porn movies, without any hint of a plot framing the act) seems so exciting and stale at the same time because you have already seen so many movies. But lust wants repetition. (First of all, repetition does not repeat the past as it actually was, but rather its virtuality, which must be conceded not only to the future, but also to the past). In pornographic film, however, the structure of repetition is more inclined towards similarity or mere copying, whereby the film illuminates and codifies a spontaneous activity, or so it seems, beyond the drive and sublimation (which, strictly speaking, is also repeatable, i.e. displaceable) down to the last detail in order to generate arousal in the viewer. Body design, language & sounds, positions & scenes, camera angles & lighting are subject to strict canonization in porn films. In addition, the films and clips (with the help of editing techniques) stage the eternal phantasm that sex is so easy, everywhere, whether it's when the car breaks down, while watching TV or on the beach. In their role as embodied arousal machines, the actors can always and they can do anything. This fiction packages sexuality, especially in film, which does not hold the viewer's imagination in abeyance, like the reader of pornophile texts, for example, but strikes directly through its depiction and representation. While Sade wants to say everything, the sex film wants to show everything. In this way, the porn film permanently substitutes the desire for authenticity of the imaginative powers and the subjects, whose desire is stabilized and simultaneously destabilized in the midst of images/films that supposedly only connote the real. The chemical-electronic images of the porn film evoke a sexual stimulation that sets a

cycle in motion through the discharge of urges that no longer requires a partner or the real. The imperative of enjoyment, which in the normalized version of the advertising industry serves sex without a body, entails the production of image machinery that satisfies a programmatic interest in the consumption of sexuality.

For Preciado, porn is regulated by a kind of “spermatic Platonism” in which, above all, cumshot is real. Porn produces the illusion of *potentia gaudendi*, when arousal and its reduction is a more or less involuntary response to ejaculation, an act of desubjectivization, to which one responds with one's own desubjectivization. Pornography tells the performative truth about sexuality, i.e. it produces repetitions in the public sphere and always remains integrated into the control cycle of arousal-frustration-excitement. While it can be argued that the sex and bodies in porn are unrealistic, it is the fictional that contains the platonic normative form around which the industrial complex of sex and gender circulates. The culture industry attempts to moralize the porn industry, to attribute a non-cinematographic character to its practices, organs and signs, that is, to denounce it in order to tap into it at the same time in terms of the sexualization of production, the informatization of bodies and the maintenance of the arousal-frustration-capital circuit. After all, porn is a media product as much as an art product as a pop product.

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